

## THE BOOK OF THE DEAD.

*The Book of the Dead: an English Translation of the Chapters, Hymns, &c., of the Theban Recension, with Introduction, Notes, &c., and with Four Hundred and Twenty Vignettes.* By E. A. Wallis Budge, M.A. Litt.D., D.Lit. In three volumes. Pp. xcvi + viii + iii + 702. Vols. vi. viii. of the series "Books on Egypt and Chaldæa." (London: Kegan Paul and Co., Ltd., 1901.)

READERS of NATURE will remember that nearly three years ago we noticed the appearance of a work, published by the trustees of the British Museum, in which facsimiles were given of the Egyptian papyri of Hunefer, Anhai, Kerasher and Netchemet, together with the text of the papyrus of Nu, the whole work being edited and annotated or translated by Dr. Wallis Budge, the keeper of our national collection of Oriental antiquities. As we pointed out at the time, this monumental work completed the series of facsimiles of papyri of the "Book of the Dead," which the trustees of the Museum have published at intervals during the last eighteen years, and by its appearance furnished scholars with a remarkable series of papyri of all periods for the study of the funereal literature of the ancient Egyptians. The great amount of new material published in this series of volumes rendered still more apparent the want of a complete edition of the text of the "Book of the Dead," which has been increasingly felt since the appearance in 1886 of M. Naville's "Das Todtenbuch der Ägypter," in which were given the various chapters from the different papyri then available.

The want was supplied by Dr. Budge, who, under the title "Chapters of Coming Forth by Day," published a complete edition of the text, based upon all known papyri, together with a translation and a full vocabulary to the hieroglyphic texts. This bulky work in three volumes appealed in the main to scholars, while its price placed it beyond the reach of many whose interest in the "Book of the Dead" stopped short of the acquisition of its complete hieroglyphic text. It was in answer to numerous requests from this latter class of readers, as we learn from the preface to the volumes before us, that the publishers decided to include Dr. Budge's English translation in their series of little "Books on Egypt and Chaldæa." The books under review, however, contain no mere reprint of a portion of the former work. Careful revision, based on a comparison of the original documents, constitutes the translation a new edition of the English rendering; and while from the introduction the general reader may gain a knowledge of the history, object and contents of the "Book of the Dead," he need not be puzzled by obscure references or phrases in the translation if he consults the many explanatory notes which have been added to this edition. We shall in the main confine ourselves to the new material thus presented, and shall refer in some detail to the remarkable series of vignettes here published for the first time; before doing so, however, it will be necessary to sketch briefly the nature of the religious texts which are here translated.

The title "Book of the Dead" is now almost a household word, and it is never likely to be changed either for the Egyptian title "Chapters of Coming Forth by Day,"

or for any conventional description of its contents. That it is unsatisfactory Dr. Budge admits, for the "Book of the Dead" is not a book in the strict sense, that is to say, it is not a fixed composition the different copies of which vary but slightly. But the title is short, it is sanctioned by the authority of Champollion and Lepsius, and the texts so described certainly concern the dead; moreover, it is far preferable to the titles "Ritual of the Dead" and "Funeral Ritual," which have been suggested as substitutes. The great body of Egyptian religious texts which bear this title have a long and varied history; with their origin buried in the remote past, they grew by accretion throughout the whole life of the Egyptian nation, and their contents reflect the beliefs and opinions of many different and conflicting schools of thought. But, as Dr. Budge points out, every chapter or section that has yet been recovered has a link which connects it with the rest; however barbarous or however exalted may be the character of the beliefs a chapter embodies, it shares a common object with the others—that of benefiting in some way the deceased. And it is this common object which constitutes the claim of the "Book of the Dead" to be the great national religious composition of ancient Egypt. In what way its chapters were to benefit the deceased may best be described in Dr. Budge's own summary:—

"They were intended to give him the power to have and to enjoy life everlasting, to give him everything he required in the life beyond the grave, to ensure his victory over his foes, to procure for him the power of going whithersoever he pleased and when and how he pleased, to preserve the mummy intact, and finally to enable his soul to enter into the bark of Rā or into whatever abode of the blessed had been conceived of by him."

The recently discovered graves of some of the indigenous inhabitants of Egypt show that two distinct methods of burial were practised at that early period, and probably by two distinct peoples. By the one the dead were partially burnt, and afterwards the skull and bones were placed in a shallow pit; by the other the body was buried either whole or after it had been dismembered. Both peoples oriented the dead in the same direction and both made offerings to the dead. It is clear, therefore, that both peoples had a clear perception of a future life, while the traces of bitumen discovered by Dr. Fouquet upon some of the buried bodies suggest that these early inhabitants of Egypt, like their later descendants, believed that the welfare of the deceased depended upon the preservation of their earthly remains. Although no inscriptions have been found in these early graves, there is much that lends colour to Dr. Budge's suggestion that the origin of the "Book of the Dead" may be traced to the prayers and formulæ recited during burial at this early period in order to preserve the dead body from the attacks of wild animals and from decay. The earliest written version of the "Book of the Dead" occurs upon the walls of the chambers and passages in the pyramids of the kings of the fifth and sixth dynasties at Sakḥāra, and it does not, therefore, date from an earlier period than B.C. 3500; but the mistakes and misunderstandings of the scribes who engraved these texts prove that many of the formulæ were even then unintelligible

by reason of their antiquity; moreover, the beasts and creatures, which the prayers and spells were intended to frighten away from the dead man, belong to the period when forests clothed the banks of the Nile in Egypt and river monsters of all kinds abounded which are now only to be found on the upper reaches of the Blue Nile and near the Great Lakes.

In his introduction, Dr. Budge has brought together some exceedingly interesting evidence that parts of the "Book of the Dead" were in general use even before the period of the kings of the first dynasty; but what concerns us here is, not the early history of the book, but the traces which its early history has left upon it, and which have been retained even in its most perfect and complete form, the so-called "Theban version," which is found written upon papyri in tombs of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth dynasties. The Egyptian was conservative to the backbone, and to this conservatism the anthropologist and the scientific student of religion are much indebted; for as he advanced in his religious beliefs and conceptions, he did not discard all traces of his earlier and more primitive state, but along with the profession of his more spiritual faith he jealously clung to and retained the earlier spells and formulæ which had long ceased to apply to his own condition of life. It is thus possible in the "Book of the Dead" to trace the semi-barbarous North-African element contending with more moral and spiritual beliefs, the rise of which Dr. Budge traces to the presence of some Proto-Asiatic element in the composition of the Egyptian race. The space at our disposal does not admit of our treating this fascinating subject at greater length, and for a more detailed discussion we must refer the reader to Dr. Budge's introduction.

We have already made a brief reference to one of the most striking characteristics of this latest edition of the "Book of the Dead"—the beautiful series of outline blocks with which the chapters are illustrated. The ancient Egyptian scribes and artists used to add to the separate chapters or sections of the work vignettes, or pictures, intended to illustrate their general contents and also to have in themselves a magical effect upon the destinies of the deceased; and these pictures are often of considerable assistance in the interpretation of the texts to which they refer. Dr. Budge has selected the vignettes from the best papyri, and where the designs vary in different papyri he has given more than one version; as interesting examples of varying treatment we may refer to the three vignettes illustrating the "Weighing of the Heart" (p. 31 f.), the numerous illustrations to chapter xvii. and the curious variant to the vignettes of chapter xxxvi. This last chapter ensures the driving away of the insect called *Apshait*, which Dr. Budge identifies with

"the beetle which is often found crushed between the bandages of poorly made mummies or even inside the body itself, where it has forced its way in search of food."

Thus, in most vignettes to this chapter the deceased is represented spearing a beetle, as in those illustrated on p. 161; but in the vignette on p. 162 the deceased is portrayed spearing a pig and not a beetle, which the translator ingeniously explains as due to the scribe having confused the proper name *Apshait* with *shaâ*, the word for "pig." The vignettes throughout the

volume have been faithfully drawn from the originals in bold, clear outline, and, apart from the light they throw upon the text, they form in themselves a beautiful series of examples of Egyptian design and draughtsmanship.

In conclusion, we may say that we heartily endorse the remarks which are made in the preface with regard to the fashion that has grown up among certain writers on Egyptology during the last few years, who decry the "Book of the Dead" and announce as a great discovery that parts of its text are corrupt. But, as Dr. Budge remarks, this fact has been well known to Egyptologists for the last fifty years, and is, moreover, a characteristic shared by every great national religious composition which is handed down first by oral tradition and secondly by copies which are multiplied by professional scribes.

"The more the 'Book of the Dead' is read and examined," he adds, "the better chance there is of its difficult allusions being explained and its dark passages made clear, and this much-to-be-desired result can only be brought about by the study, and not by the condemnation, of its texts."

To this end no other scholar has contributed so much as Dr. Budge himself, and his latest efforts, embodied in the volumes before us, will place a rich store of material within the reach of the humblest worker in the great field of the comparative study of religions.

#### FOSSIL FISHES IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

*Catalogue of Fossil Fishes in the British Museum (Natural History).* Part iv. By Arthur Smith Woodward, LL.D., F.R.S., F.G.S. Pp. xxxviii + 636, 22 figures, 16 plates. (London: Printed by order of the Trustees, 1901.)

THE fourth volume of this great work, which has just appeared after an interval of six years since the publication of the third volume, completes the account of the unrivalled collection of fossil fishes preserved in the national museum, to which the author has devoted so much attention during the twenty years which have preceded his appointment to the post of keeper of the geological department, on the retirement of Dr. Henry Woodward. The issue of this volume, dealing entirely with the Teleosts, was eagerly awaited, not only by palæontologists, but also by all students of fishes, as great hopes were entertained that a revised arrangement of the bony fishes, the preponderating element in the recent fauna, would result in very considerable progress in our understanding of the inter-relations of the components of this difficult group.

If the feeling of joy be mixed with some disappointment at so many problems of classification remaining unsolved, the fault rests entirely with the nature of the material with which Dr. Woodward has had to deal. Those who merely glance over the beautiful series of fish-remains exhibited in the gallery at South Kensington are apt to carry away too sanguine an impression of the osteological information which is to be obtained from their study. It is a fact that, on some very essential points, fossil remains, however numerous and well preserved they may appear, still fail to afford the information which is most wanted. As an example we would allude